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SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES
UNITED STATES SENATE

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES
UNITED STATES SENATE

SUBJECT: Department of Defense Nuclear Enterprise

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Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration

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Introduction

Chairman Udall, Ranking Member Sessions, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss Air Force nuclear programs.

As the Assistant Chief of Staff for Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration, my team, on behalf of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, leads planning, policy development, advocacy, integration, and assessment for the Airmen and weapon systems performing Nuclear Deterrence Operations, a core function of our United States Air Force. Stewardship and continuous improvement of this mission remains a top Air Force priority, in support of the President's mandate that the United States maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent.

The stability that a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent provides in today's increasingly complex, multi-polar, proliferated environment is essential to U.S. national security. In order to maintain this vital capability for our nation and our allies who rely on it, the Air Force remains fully committed to making the necessary long-term investments in the development of our personnel and in the sustainment, modernization, and recapitalization of our nuclear forces and supporting infrastructure

Deliberate Development of Our Airmen

The exacting nature of Nuclear Deterrence Operations requires a cadre of experienced, motivated professionals committed to the highest levels of performance and accountability. For that reason, the Airmen we entrust with the special responsibility of supporting and conducting the nuclear mission are the single most important element of the enterprise and are foundational

to its success. Growing and sustaining a cadre of officers, enlisted Airmen, and civilians who possess the necessary quality and depth of nuclear expertise is a multi-dimensional effort that incorporates force development, personnel management, education, and training processes. In our ongoing effort to strengthen the nuclear mission, we have worked hard in recent years to institutionalize a more deliberate and holistic approach to human capital management.

In support of that effort, the Air Force instituted a Nuclear Enterprise Human Capital Strategy to strengthen manning and management of nuclear career fields. We recently formalized our processes and policies for identifying, designating, and tracking Key Nuclear Billets (KNBs), select positions of responsibility within the nuclear enterprise that are vital to its health and sustainment. KNBs require defined levels of nuclear experience based on each specific position and are given the highest assignment priority. The program allows us to more effectively manage the assignment of qualified personnel to critical nuclear positions, and we rely on a periodic re-validation process to ensure KNBs are aligned to meet the constantly changing needs of the enterprise.

We are leveraging the best practices learned from the KNB process to address specific areas of need, for example, in the identification of personnel supporting the nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) mission. This process allows us to better assess and address experience gaps in order to ensure a continuous pipeline of NC3 personnel with the right combination of training and expertise will be available in the years to come. Through a separate effort, we are in the early stages of establishing best practices for developing our civilian nuclear workforce, a critical facet of the enterprise on which we depend to provide continuity and highly specialized technical expertise. We are also revising the methods we use to select senior nuclear commanders to include a more robust screening and interview processes. Our efforts to instill